and the auction assumes a competitive state, resolving the
competitive state in accordance with the maximum margins
proposed by the competitive bidders.

--17. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, wherein
said competitive state resolving step determines a successful
bidder as the bidder having proposed the largest maximum
margin.

--18. The auction method as claimed in claim 17, wherein
said maximum margin is the difference between the price
acceptable to pay and the desired price.

--19. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, further
comprising the step of:
        collecting an amount information on the product to
be auctioned from each bidder.

--20. The auction method as claimed in claim 19, wherein
said competitive state resolving step resolves the competitive
state using said amount information.

--21. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, further
comprising the step of:
        continuing the auction after the competitive state
resolving step.

--22. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, wherein said collecting step is performed before the auction starts.

--23. The auction method as claimed in claim 16, further comprising the step of:

if the auction does not assume a competitive state, determining a successful bidder as the bidder having proposed the highest desired price.

--24. An auction apparatus for performing an auction, the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals via a network, comprising:

means for providing information on a product to be auctioned via the network;

means for collecting a desired price for the product and a maximum margin of the price acceptable to pay proposed by each bidder via the network; and

means, if the desired price proposed by one of the bidders coincides with the desired price proposed by another bidder and the auction assumes a competitive state, for resolving the competitive state in accordance with the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.

--25. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 24, wherein said competitive state resolving means determines a successful bidder as the bidder having proposed the largest maximum margin.

--26. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 25, wherein said maximum margin is the difference between the price acceptable to pay and the desired price.

--27. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 24, further comprising:

    means for collecting an amount information on the product to be auctioned from each bidder.

--28. The auction method as claimed in claim 27, wherein said competitive state resolving means resolves the competitive state using said amount information.

--29. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:

    means for continuing the auction after said competitive state resolves.

--30. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 23, wherein collection by said collecting means is performed before the auction starts.

--31. The auction apparatus as claimed in claim 23,
further comprising:

        means, if the auction does not assume a competitive
state, for determining a successful bidder as the bidder
having proposed the highest desired price.

--32. An auction apparatus for performing an auction,
the apparatus connected to a plurality of bidder terminals via
a network, comprising:

        a storage device storing a program; and

        a processor, connected to said storage device,
executing the following steps according to the program:

        providing information on a product to be
auctioned via the network;

        collecting a desired price for the product and
a maximum margin of the price acceptable to pay proposed
by each bidder via the network; and

        if the desired price proposed by one of the
bidders coincides with the desired price proposed by
another bidder and the auction assmues a competitive
state, resolving the competitive state in accordance with
the maximum margins proposed by the competitive bidders.